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THE  
AGE OF PRINT:  
A POEM,  
DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY,  
AT CAMBRIDGE,  
26 AUGUST, 1830.

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BY GRENVILLE MELLEN.

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BOSTON:  
PUBLISHED BY CARTER AND HENDEE.

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1830.

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## THE AGE OF PRINT.

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WHEN Time was young, if we may trust to fame,  
Heaven's exil'd monarch to Italia came.  
Forth by his own unconquerable Jove,  
From skies cast crownless o'er the earth to rove,  
There first the royal Wanderer found a throne,  
And a wide realm luxurious as his own ;  
And there, from crime and chaos first arose,  
On Man the fabled kingdom of repose.  
It was the morning of a better day  
Than had yet warm'd him on his pilgrim way ;  
The world all slept in beauty, and the years  
Stole on unheeded and unstained by tears ;  
The clouds in quiet stoop'd, or sail'd above,  
And all the slumb'ry air was peace and love.  
Up from the land unceasing music roll'd  
An anthem to the stars o'er Saturn's Age of Gold.  
But ah ! Fate lifts her wand, and empires pass,  
Like spectres dim on History's magic glass !  
So soon had that stern Roman rule begun,  
That all things here should in rotation run.  
The King of Gods himself grew tired of men,  
So time has prov'd, though poets say not when.  
Sated with sunshine, weary of his reign,

The world ran back to wilderness again ;  
 Back did the Age to primal chaos swim,  
 And mind went riot, while the gold grew dim.  
 Shadow and silence on the ruins bode,  
 And towering demons through the twilight strode.  
 Dulness the chief, in ebon cloak and cowl,  
 Fan'd by the pinions of her swooping owl,  
 With steps of stealth grop'd on her lonely way,  
 Full of the luxury of her drowsy sway ;  
 Sleep held her train, and from her lanking hair  
 Drop'd the slow tribute of the misty air.  
 And thus as o'er some empire of the dead,  
 Swept on its cloudy wings the Age of Lead.  
 How long this dreamy monster veil'd the earth,  
 Before some age less ponderous had its birth,  
 We say nor sing not—for confusion waits  
 The bard who here may rashly deal in dates.  
 Though all may see quite plain — or think they see,  
 Still reas'ning heads on Dulness disagree ;  
 While some indignant cry, that baser ore  
 Was but the type and telegraph of yore,  
 Some, no less wise, nor given to thinking ill,  
 Swear that the dozy metal marks us still !

Yet over that Dead Sea a change there went,  
 Stirring to life each sluggish element ; —  
 Then some pale star came twinkling through the waste,  
 And the clouds lifted in a heavy haste,  
 Till morning glimmer'd — so the legends say,  
 And tortur'd twilight struggled into day.  
 Some other age less hopeless than the past,

Sprung from the sinking limbo of the last ;  
 Perhaps those tearless times—the iron years,  
 Whose mention comes familiar to our ears —  
 Or 't was, perhaps — as recollection dawns,  
 That bolder age which Byron sung, of Bronze !


But not to linger round these thankless days,  
 Leave we their sadness on our own to gaze.  
 This rambling guess-work of the past is pain ;  
 Let Fancy then retire — but Truth remain.  
 And let the emblem worth or worthless be,  
 That marks the era of complacent we,  
 Home to both wise and witless it must come,  
 A truth that strikes all disputation dumb,  
 Books by the bale proclaim it without stint,  
 Era of PAPER, and the AGE OF PRINT.

O who shall track the illimitable mind !  
 As free and shoreless as the charter'd wind —  
 That sprung from earth by some impulsive spell,  
 Bids bounds till yesterday unreach'd, farewell,  
 And on the pathway of its tireless flight,  
 Bathes in still new and unimagined light ;  
 Until the risen Future round it pours,  
 And floods the panting spirit as it soars !

Not light the task of glory to portray  
 The large and letter'd picture of the day ;  
 Where by his book each hero's part is play'd,  
 And all the world is out in masquerade.  
 Then let that graceful charity be yours

Which lists, though late — and wearied, yet endures ;  
 Though time is short, yet think my theme is long—  
 Heed but the text — ye can forgive the song.

We see, alas ! a peaceful age gone blue —  
 Mad after lore since dreadful Waterloo ; —  
 Those frantic days when o'er the shaking land,  
 As fast and fierce as Samiel's whistling sand,  
 Bullets and bulletins together sped,  
 Joint couriers of the living and the dead.  
 How chang'd the face of empires ! — and how dull  
 The modern mode to test the strength of skull !  
 To paper now the generation runs,  
 And polish'd Goths succeed to warlike Huns ;  
 Our era finds no helm upon the brow,  
 And the brave past to intellect must bow.  
 That mark'd the splendid butcheries of mankind—  
 Ours the campaigns and victories of mind ;  
 That, the mêlée of emperors and dukes,  
 Reserv'd for us the battle of the Books.

And first, the leading wonder of the time,  
 See harps hung up and poets run from rhyme !  
 The minstrel monarchs dash the rising song,  
 And leave for earth their mountain Helicon.   
 To Irish History goes Anacreon Moore,  
 While Walter Scott writes sermons by the score !  
 But soon aweary of his texts and creeds,  
 He turns to gardening — eloquent on seeds.  
 Or doffs the cowl and puts the grandpa on,  
 In little tales for master Littlejohn —

Napoleon or a novel — 't is the same —  
 To both he goes — from both returns in fame !  
 Yet 'mid them all, disguise her as you will,  
 Ennobling Genius shines transcendent still.  
 Behold the deathless stamp of power they bear,  
 The royal port of intellect is there !  
 O glorious sight ! worlds wonder as they gaze,  
 To see the idol-bard that lights our days,  
 To the mind's music, which we all can hear,  
 Through each department with a grace severe,  
 Tread like a king, with sceptre and with ball,  
 And shine in each — still peerless through them all !

Yet once again in lands beyond the blue,  
 What paper wonders start upon our view !  
 Laureates and ladies with alternate sway,  
 Gossip and gravity divide the day ;  
 A medley stranger than the world e'er saw,  
 Books of the Church and Books of the Boudoir !  
 Here Lady Morgan chats of taste and town,  
 There Lady Byron writes a poet down ; —  
 Woman, no longer dedicate to love,  
 Assumes with grace the intellectual glove,  
<sup>1</sup> And o'er their ashes in a bright command  
 Prelates and premiers behold her stand,  
 Giving to everlasting print their name —  
 They who once shar'd now guardians of their fame !  
 Ay, woman ! pride and problem of our age —  
 Here, too, she rules the printer and the page ;  
 Exerts on laggard man her moral power,  
 And shows in letters she will have her hour !

Past are the days of blue. Ye critics, look !  
 She writes — and talks — and moves — a living book !  
 She scans the times — and weighing all results  
 Makes classics for the cradle — and adults ;  
 With wide material at her quick command  
 To new forms springing from her plastic hand,  
 In each event incalculably brisk,  
<sup>a</sup> Now builds a Monthly, now an Obelisk ;  
 And with a glowing ardor panting still  
 Fights for new victory on Bunker Hill !  
 Where, in that work of ages, just begun,  
 Each father's daughter beats each father's son ;  
 And where to *take* that minstrel we begin, ✓  
 Who erst in moral melody did sing,  
 ' Sermons in stones, and good in everything ' —  
 Since, strange to tell, so tongues and titles vary,  
 E'en Quincy granite preaches — and is literary !

Next wander on, with clos'd voluptuous eye,  
 To those dear books we read, but never buy ;  
 There see, in linen backs, romances, tales,  
 Flood half the land, and circulate by bales —  
 In such expansion that you well might deem  
 There 's no condenser of your moral steam.  
 Lo ! fancy here on high endeavor goes,  
 Spurns the sad poem and runs mad in prose ;  
 No longer stalks your grave and metre'd bard  
 Whose heroes all talk passion by the yard,  
 In a thin, thankless pamphlet at the best,  
 Rant half its worth and scenery the rest ;  
 But the sinart novel in two volumes, comes,

Usher'd along by editorial drums,  
 And with a silent and complacent grace  
 Exiles the formal Drama from her place.  
 Here is Sir Walter, from two quarters — new —  
 Revis'd editions, both — and rivals too —  
 Here Bulwer comes with Godwin — hand in hand —  
 And Mary Russell Mitford joins the band.  
 All England's beautiful and bold is out,  
 And e'en our sons of fiction swell the rout —  
 While German tales of wild and elfin birth,  
 In riot ride and nightmare half the earth !  
 Behold where fools and fashionables crowd,  
 Flush'd with new hope — and for the latest loud,  
 Call for the catalogue of lounging books,  
 That drive you dreaming by their very looks ;  
 Old whimsy authors, that delay the gout,  
 Or you from thinking, when you can 't go out ;  
 Too clearly stupid to awake your fears,  
 Lest what you read should generate ideas !  
 There some lean Cassius with the horrors thin,  
 Asks if the last black mystery is 'in,'  
 Or some 'white maiden' o'er the counter bends  
 To grasp some dear destruction ere she wends ;  
 From page to page unceasingly she turns —  
 Here fancy glitters and there passion burns ;  
 Too horrid this, and that too grave by far,  
 She feels herself grown quite particular ;  
 Till with impatience vex'd, and half in shame,  
 She takes the book that bears the hardest name ;  
 Convinc'd at least it must be something new,  
 That boasts such title and such binding too.

And thus, from hour to hour, in endless line,  
 Novels in triumph trample on the Nine ;  
 Cordials and drugs alternately they come,  
 Now full of mirth and now of opium.  
 Some born in bitterness, or evil hour,  
 Though charg'd with style, and dedicate to power,  
 Too weak to find apology in haste,  
 Should be, like merchants' folios, all mark'd 'Waste ;'  
 While some that giant, gauntlet hand betray,  
 That opes Golcondas in its conquering way !  
 And few, perchance, that gentler magic bear,  
 That lightens life, and cheats you to a tear —  
 Whose silent wand, no matter where you roam,  
 Bids every landscape to its own transform,  
 Till by the power of mastering genius sway'd,  
 Rocks, sun, and seaweed turn to rural shade ;  
 Romance, instead of joyance, rides the breeze,  
 You feel your brow grow cool, and fancy trees —  
 For forest noon-tide now no longer pant,  
 And even dream of shrubbery on nude Nahant !

Say ye — what omens do these years disclose  
 When bards thus sink from song — and glide to prose !  
 No longer doom'd to live by keeping time,  
 See how they amplify, releas'd from rhyme !  
 Where late one volume forth to Music stole,  
 Charg'd with the measur'd cadence of the soul,  
 Now in hot haste see three come trampling on —  
 That mien of earlier modesty all gone !  
 Cheapen'd and hawk'd from press to market-place,  
 Void of hexameters and lost to grace.

See drooping minstrels now unstring the lyre,  
 And like wise dames at night rake up their fire ;—  
 Reserving thoughts that breathe and words that burn,  
 Not in some pictur'd but convenient urn,  
 That, when the morn of poetry comes round,  
 Still glowing fancies may again be found.  
 Meantime determin'd not for fame to strive,  
 But show the world how large a trade they drive ;  
 As though it were their glory, not how well,  
 But fast, they fashion'd books, to sink or sell.  
 Here comes a Life, and here a Magazine,  
 And there some toiling History stalks between ;  
 And last — O shame ! in this our swelling land  
 How many spirits of the poet-band,  
 For men and office which they never saw,  
 Assume a Daily and conduct the war !  
 Alas ! too oft a truant from his art  
 The bard acts half or haltingly his part,  
 As when tragedians draw the buskin down  
 To play at Punch or personate the clown !

And must it be that poesy shall die,  
 And ye tread crownless, children of the sky !  
 O no ! new triumphs and new garlands wait  
 The gifted hearts that round her congregate.  
 Woman yet lingers at the loftiest fount,  
 And guards the waters of the sacred mount ;  
 No rival wreath is gleaming from the height,  
 But the proud priestess stands — alone — in light !  
 And a clear voice is there — whose thrill commands  
 In echo-tribute back, the ' Lays of many Lands.'

Still, though but few around the summit glide,  
 Faint not, ye bards, who tread the mountain's side ;  
 For though ye may not win the upper soil,  
 The world shall give ye credit for your toil.  
 And what though summer poet may opine,  
 What city cousins whisper, — ' he 's divine ! '   
 Yet see his first edition with despair,  
 By belles at midnight twisted in their hair,  
 He feels, that buried on a brow so pure,  
 He has, at least, a splendid sepulture !  
 Small cause has he to mutter or to mourn —  
 For lo ! to fame triumphal he is borne !  
 He goes to glory in a lady's curls,  
 And boasts a wreath worth Alexander's worlds !  
 Then faint not — shrink not — but replume your helms,  
 A line may save ye where a verse condemns.  
 It is not in the many books we write  
 The knowing public takes the most delight —  
 'T is to the peerless thought that lights his page  
 The poet finds the tribute of his age ;  
 He wins his garland in a smile or tear,  
 Though he but coin two stanzas once a year.

But turn we hence to what the world would deem  
 The first and noblest service of our theme.  
 There is a moral warfare sounding wide  
 In tones of tumult o'er the human tide !  
 From church to church the paper carnage flies,  
 And a whole people of a sermon dies.  
 Alas ! the hallow'd ministry no more  
 Bears the blest tidings which it breath'd of yore ;

Not the devoted temples of our clime  
 Escape the maddening spirit of the time ;  
 For lo ! all arm'd — and stern within the veil,  
 Religion ponders in perpetual mail —  
 Not o'er the stake and scaffold, as of old,  
 But the dear stock of some sectarian fold ;  
 Then on the heels of some heretic hint  
 Mark her swift leap in panoply of print !  
 Now to thy tuck, ecclesiastic drum !  
 Forth starts a pamphlet, now octavos come —  
 Oft loud for zeal, but faint for charity,  
 They pass that christian excellence quite by ;  
 And while they both to argument give place,  
 Forget religion while they treat of grace.  
 Yet each firm party holds its dogmas dear —  
 Some are infallible, and all sincere.  
 On the same volume, life and hope are cast —  
 Standard at first, though reason'd down at last.  
 And while the champions nurse their holy ire  
 Around that common fount of heavenly fire,  
 Too oft unmindful of their sacred lot  
 Their love grows faint, and Bible is forgot ;  
 While oft, to sully doctrines deem'd divine,  
 Bad taste, bad temper, and bad health combine.

Alas ! how prone is human nature still  
 To bid stern principle give way to will !  
 How deep the plague spots of our passions lie  
 In us who all claim heirship to the sky !  
 Shall bigot Faith or Conscience build her throne !  
 We sicken and we die — we all go down,

The meek — the proud — the trembling and the brave,  
 Into the rayless chambers of the grave.—  
 Where is Ambition then — that once o'eraw'd,  
 And would have storm'd the spirit from its God !  
 That desolate Ambition — thrice accurst,  
 Would doom the free-born Conscience to the dust ;  
 And dares unfurl its banners in a sky  
 Where a new Israel fled for liberty !  
 O go among the tombs—there, all the hours  
 Teach you the simple worship of the flowers—  
 Emblems of man — the creatures of a day —  
 Springing from earth and bending round decay !  
 Behold *they* bow in mystic silence there,  
 And yield *united* incense to the air ! —  
 No more — we rove a melancholy way  
 To follow still where frailty loves to stray ;  
 Would that such frailty *were* a poet's dream,  
 That turns to saddest our sublimest theme !

What piles — what paper pyramids arise,  
 'Neath whose Egyptian height the Jurist lies,  
 How grave reporters do as they have done,  
 Whose tomes outrun our clients, ten to one,  
 How stock increases as the trade declines,  
 And each attorney wonders how he dines,  
 Forbid the story, shade of Richard Roe —  
 Keep up the charter'd mystery as we go !  
 And that, the healing art, congenial sure,  
 Since all its name professes is, to cure,  
 How learned doctors write, and all how wise,  
 How dear their books — how long they advertise,

Not mine to sing you — of these truths possess,  
 Imagine much — experience proves the rest.  
 Now onward pass, where literary war  
 Comes like the voice of waters from afar ;  
 And the high eddying dust scarce settling down,  
 Proclaims the brawl that agitates the town !  
 But yet one moment linger at that door,  
 Whence bursts the urchin song and young uproar —  
 Behold within in pictur'd pomp display'd  
 Files of large print for little optics made —  
 Science at sport, and tiny spirits bent  
 Around her diagram and instrument ;  
 Morals at pastime with the joyous crew,  
 And virtue, in quaint verse, just cheated into view !  
 While gentle woman, like an angel there,  
 Stoops to confer the bliss, 't is bliss to share.  
 O pure but simple service, well for all  
 Did boasted paper to no meaner fall ;  
 Well for the world were half its lessons given  
 With the same singleness that points to heaven ;  
 Better in knowledge oft were man a fool,  
 And every empire but an infant school !

In two octavos made by Mr Moore,  
 We learn how Noel Byron wrote and swore —  
 And how in freedom of unsandall'd heel,  
 The giant Harold look'd in dishabille ;  
 But why such portrait paint for all the world,  
 Of one whose lip alternate pal'd and curl'd  
 With passion's ceaseless eloquence — whose song  
 Was that the God who made him had done wrong ; —

Who in the poor impatience of his ire  
 Oft flung mad discord round each thrilling wire.  
 Why let th' affected frailties that should die,  
 Go down with such a deathless memory?  
 And him whose music rose on every clime,  
 Till all hearts echo'd to its wondrous chime,  
 Why gravely seal him as the child of Fate,  
 And blazon faults but infamously great!  
 How vain — how worse than vain, to prate in prose  
 To a hard public of poetic woes,  
 To charge on Genius, what a tyro sees  
 Comes of mere temper gotten in a breeze;  
 Array old Destiny for half her ills,  
 And reckon nothing for the worst of wills.  
 Alas! the day of intellectual rant —  
 What reign of horror like the age of Cant!  
 Then let the bard in splendid rest remain  
 With glory sepulchred on Grecia's plain!  
 Be ours to view him when his living lyre  
 Felt Nature's passion, not his own, inspire;  
 When to its ringing melody there rose  
 Thoughts born in beauty, mid that deep repose,  
 When the heart turns to virtue like a child,  
 And the bright waters leap, unmingled, undefiled!  
 These were the nobler fountains of his fame —  
 There to his feet a world in worship came!  
 And now, while he, a brother of the band,  
 Unveils the minstrel with unsparing hand,  
 Though colder hearts may think, 't was wise to tell  
 Such thankless humors so the book sold well;  
 Though thousands hasten to his graceful page,

There to repeat the poet's Pilgrimage,  
 Let him his doubtful eulogy rehearse —  
 Be ours the epitaph of simpler verse !  
 When Byron woke, new lustre crown'd the years —  
 When Byron slept a world was veil'd in tears !

With step chastis'd, and grave and guarded mein,  
 Next turn we where our Quarterlies are seen.  
 And well we know the peril of our ground,  
 But Truth our aim, no matter where we sound.  
 To her, though oft with privilege endow'd,  
 The critic stands uncharter'd as the crowd.  
 Behold the royal volumes on their way,  
 Bearing the seal of power and port of sway !  
 And while the North's bold trumpet fills the wind,  
 South keeps not back, nor is the West behind.  
 But ah ! we hope for harmony in vain  
 When rival blasts must swell the sounding strain.

Now mark how, sometimes, some imperial two  
 Think of their latitude as they review —  
 Grow clannish as the books they analyze,  
 And as they sprung, so stamp them weak or wise.  
 Until each public to allegiance true,  
 Takes every author as its Journals do.  
*Here*, all the world delighted hums applause ;  
*There*, one the taste condemns, and one abhors ;  
 Here music charms — but there 't is out of time —  
 Here we call poetry what they call rhyme ;  
 And oft the best is branded as the worst,  
 Caress'd at Rome to be at Athens curs'd.

But mark the quick alliance to repel,  
 When Scottish slander sounds th' alarum bell !  
 ³ When to defend a blanket or a book,  
 All strife for other glory is forsook.  
 And first, with eye half-clos'd and curious air,  
 See foreign Gullivers approach to stare —  
 Some on us love their telescopes to bend,  
 And scan our virtues through the smaller end ;  
 While others with a weak but wicked eye,  
 Whose mode of scandal is to magnify,  
 On us incontinently reverse the lens,  
 Whose gifted glasses multiply by tens.  
 ⁴ Here comes some Clerk or Captain, with a ' *tone*,'  
 And unappeas'd ' *expression*,' all his own —  
 Who, doom'd to cut us down, had ground his axe  
 Some twenty years before, in Halifax.  
 See how they start, with fame already warm,  
 These graduates of the yard-stick and yard-arm !  
 Convinc'd 't is rude and notional to gaze,  
 Scour ten republics in as many days —  
 Avoid the country and run down the coast,  
 And get experience from a flying post.  
 Thus, through the impartial medium of a coach,  
 Each line they write should be beyond reproach !  
 Too sure of truth in one place to abide,  
 They hurry on, reviewing as they ride ;  
 And with a mania for believing blest,  
 Note all the driver says, and dream the rest ; —  
 Then cross the sea and throw it into print,  
 Consol'd, if there 's not fact, there 's money in 't.

And thus we buy opinions of ourselves  
 To grace our garrets and disgrace our shelves.  
 All this is well. Their quick mortality  
 Proves each dull book's propensity to die ;  
 Consign'd unhonor'd to the tribe of trash,  
 Paupers in wit and infamously rash.

These are the giant travellers, whom to kill  
 Our monarch Journals point the indignant quill ;  
 One the rude buffet with a blow gives back ;  
 So unrefin'd, it rivals the attack ;  
 The other, mustering with politer rage,  
 All patriot vengeance on its foes would wage,  
 Yet with a slow and half repentant pen,  
 Swears, though ungentle, they are gentlemen !

Now sink the critic. On such heads as these,  
 'T is worse than vain to level his decrees ;  
 Though genius sometimes scathes the scribbler, yet  
 The sorry subject proves the waste of wit.  
 Be ours the country fam'd on future lyre ;  
 Where men ask questions and the fair '*take fire* ;'  
 And be our women destitute of grace  
 Because unhustled at the rout or race ;  
 Be ours the land, where, made of such stern stuff,  
 Shoes 'take no polish' and all hats look rough ;  
 Yet let Old England have this derry down —  
 It sings of memories she can 't disown —  
 Those biting recollections of the seas,  
 When our starr'd flag sail'd highest on the breeze.  
 Be hers to swell the still diverting song.

Of classic captains and a hireling throng,  
 Not ours to answer with ferocious pen,  
 Whose mispent gall shall reach but one in ten ;  
 Nor ours that tone of whining discontent,  
 One half a menace, and one half lament,  
 That mourns because our mother cannot see  
 Our gems of glory half as well as we ;  
 That writes — corrects — dilutes — so sadly tame,  
 Scorn crowns the slander while we blush for shame !  
 But hence, with eye more guarded than before,  
 Survey the tourist's passport at your door,  
 And, wanting, bid him in your entries halt,  
 Or give him, what ye should, a seat below the salt.  
 And for our volumes, charge their want of sense  
 On scenes at sea, and ocean's old offence ;  
 Deal not in Fescenninè — be never sad,  
 And if we must be, be magnanimously mad —  
 Content to rest, while so the scandal runs,  
 With books but half as pungent as our guns !

Leave we this strife of scribblers and reviews,  
 For a new conflict that invites the Muse —  
 A war that doth not recognise exempts,  
 So all make battle, or at least, attempts.  
 So wide, indeed, the moral mania flies,  
 Our grave and passionless justiciaries  
 Sometimes convinc'd, to every truth alive,  
 That two and two in politics make five ;  
 In each vacation turn a pamphleteer,  
 And when they do not judge, electioneer !  
 No longer now in loud elective halls

Man governs man by ballot-box and balls ;  
 But as in shepherd times—that simpler age—  
 When out-of-doors discussion was the rage,  
 Gray fathers vote their rulers for themselves,  
 While each brown boy grows patriot as he delves ;  
 Each village knot, politically bent,  
 To make all sure, anticipates its president.  
 Look where shrill gossips gather with their yarn,  
 Or bumpkins come to inaugurate a barn—  
 Alternate go to training—or to tea,  
 To city club or rustic revelry ;—  
 Each place and season has a touch of state,  
 Which grave conventions scarce can emulate.  
 Here him they doom, and him on whom they dote  
 They put to shame, while both are put to vote ;  
 While each dim candidate as he revolves,  
 Derives new moral splendor from *resolves*.  
 And woman too, for ever round our path,  
 Right's noblest champion in these days of wrath,  
 Lifts graceful up her white unwavering hand  
 And points the future father of the land ;  
 Twines the imagin'd laurel for his brows,  
<sup>6</sup> And finds a steamboat temple for her vows.  
 While last, not least, the urchins of the schools,  
 Wise as their fathers, whom they think but fools,  
 At every turn, turn coppers for their chief,  
 And make the election admirably brief !

The struggle next behold for place and power,  
 And what a civic Babel rules the hour !  
 But stay !—my ears with Spanish warnings fill—

'On Inquisition and the King — be still!' —  
 Yet mark that wretch whom office lures to try  
 The mountain path of popularity!  
 Domestic coats and cottons he will wear,  
 Though grieving inward at the tret and tare;  
 Yet on his honor, and such things, aver,  
 'Tis but to help the manufacturer.  
 Alas! how little boots it what his coat,  
 So prove such patriot faithful to his vote —  
 So he but keep, in honor to the nation,  
 The same side out through one administration!

The world may call us hair-brain'd if it will,  
 Yet all the world may be mistaken still.  
 True, we are quick in fight, and sparse of blows  
 On the broad sea, each elder empire knows;  
 But, of all lands, I could not name the clime  
 So much, like Fabius, given to taking time.  
 How we to Congress on high pressure go! —  
 But when once there, 't is glory to be slow —  
 There is no dignity in quick decrees —  
 It makes all sure to legislate at ease!  
 Ascend the Capitol. There long and late  
 List the loud rushing of the storms of state!  
 Around the fated charter how they roar  
 With desperation all unknown before;  
 O'er some sad section, and its worse results,  
 Mark the fierce onset, and as fierce repulse!  
 Some patriot Prosper lifts the wordy wand  
 ' And straight they close upon a plea of land;  
 Not to ordain some new Agrarian law  
 Tread your strong champions to this holy war —

For though the last delight of common sense,  
 Land is a theme too dry for eloquence —  
 And thus they all, inevitably wrong,  
 Spurn the poor acres that began the song,  
 And pouncing on old politics, they fly  
 To try the fiercest of their falconry ;  
 Oft, be it said, by some unlucky fate,  
 As out of temper as they 're out of date ;  
 Onward and onward yet they bend their way  
 As proud to hold confusion's holiday,  
 And round the fancied ruins of their path  
 Not pour but break the vials of their wrath ;  
 While those who hang upon the echoing halls  
 To trace the shifting tempest as it falls,  
 Repeat the sad confession with despair,  
 ' Order is heaven's first law ' — but never there !

Alas ! our Constitution ! who may tell  
 Not how it suffers, but how wears so well !  
 For sure survival may at least surprise  
 Where reckless fingers rush to analyze.  
 Some men are given with all things to fall out —  
 Whose obstinate disease it is to doubt ;  
 Who not of moral demonstration sure,  
 Think even mathematics might be truer ;  
 So round the Constitution oft they go,  
 Now testing by a glance and now a blow —  
 Still on the trial of its soundness bent,  
 Lest the republic should take detriment.  
 The spirit some applaud, and some the letter,  
 While some spurn both, but can 't imagine better ;  
 The honest yeoman, leaning on his spade,

Admires the work, but wonders how 't was made —  
 But the warm statesman, quick at every clue,  
 Believes at best 't was made but to undo —  
 Would every doubter to perdition send  
 That will not swell his slogan of 'amend !'  
 Shouts for some dreamy model of his own,  
 And swears, if cross'd, he'll bear the Union down !  
 Like Lucian's Jove, as told in ancient song,  
 Whose threat of thunder always prov'd him wrong.  
 Ah ! well our tried Republic might demand  
 That these unsated Solons of the land,  
 Who thus would change the charter and its scope,  
 Should bring at once their reasons and their rope,  
 And through the cool perspective of the halter  
 Should see effected what they hop'd to alter,  
 Within the letter of the Locrian law,  
 That if they did not — then the rope should draw !

And well it were, America, for thee,  
 Could fame's broad pen record but eulogy !  
 But while in lustre she reveals thy name,  
 She will not dash the story of thy shame !  
 Already blazon'd on the flying page  
 Speeds the foul tale shall thrill through every age —  
 Already there a blushing world shall read  
 Of horrid perfidy, the crowning deed.  
 Nay — tell me not of freedom — 't is but dust,  
 And all it touches wither'd and accurst ;  
 I feel no freedom where one creature bows,  
 Crush'd by a nation that forgets its vows ;  
 I feel no freedom — none — but with the dead ! —  
 My country perjur'd — and her glory fled ! —

And ye that judge not by what beams within,  
 But guide your sympathies by tint of skin ;  
 Who deem that truth, to God and virtue dear,  
 May turn to falsehood in an Indian's ear,  
 And that no sanction lingers with the deed  
 Whose simple ties are wampum and the bead ;  
 Go — and though scorn may gather on your brow  
 And slighted faith plead vainly with ye now,  
 Yet on the far unveil'd futurity  
 The fearful judgment of the past I see —  
 The stern tribunals where all lips are dumb —  
 A death-bed and a conscience yet to come !  
 And when a race of whiter hearts than ye  
 Shall gather round your lov'd ancestral tree,  
 And bid you from its shadow forth to roam  
 And seek some new and visionary home,  
 Trample your hearths, and give to long despair  
 All bright and blessed hopes that cluster there ;  
 Then breathe not — think not — but in peace depart,  
 Veiling the spirit's ire and bursting heart —  
 Let the seal'd lip in that eventful hour  
 Confess the justice and admit the power !

These have their sires — their children — and their graves —  
 Their epitaphs, the war-paths of their braves !  
 But ye have madly doomed them to forego  
 The greenwood forest and the charter'd bow,  
 There, where they rang'd magnificently free,  
 With broad, unbelted breasts, from sea to sea.

/ And thou, my country — veil thy drooping head,

Nor deem the deed forgot, when years have fled —  
 Dream not that centuries shall dim it — vain !  
 'T will fire thy forehead like the curse of Cain !

Who is there turns not sham'd and sick away  
 From that hard spirit of our infamy,  
 That in the gather'd council of our land  
 Makes 'Greek meet Greek' too oft with shrinking hand ;  
 That sneering asks the parentage of good,  
 And measures virtue by its latitude ;  
 That asks not — cares not — what the scheme may be,  
 But if it savor of geography —  
 Not if the plan to good or ill incline,  
 But if the mover live within the line !

O, how the glowing contrast crowns our view,  
 Were all who boast it to their country true !  
 Did that fine spirit mark their splendid strife  
 Should grace each mental tournament of life ;  
 Ready in knightly list to yield the palm  
 To the best armor and the bravest arm ;  
 That with a noble courtesy repays  
 Successful warfare with the lip of praise ;  
 Imagines virtue sterner than its own,  
 Nor deems itself in knowledge quite alone ;  
 And proud to hope the tribute may return,  
 Owns loftier wisdom, and submits to learn ;  
 As Helen's tripod that was pass'd of yore  
 From Thales' yielding hand, to Thales came once more !

But Paper has its patronage. Behold,

How presses gather round the god of gold!  
 New journals spring, or old ones take new date  
 Under the shifting sunshine of the State;  
 One lauds the land till all its ink runs dry,  
 Which goes for plaudits of the dynasty;  
 Another stoutly writes that age is come  
 They call political millenium;  
 Which means that peaceful and devoted hour,  
 When *one* untainted party has the power!  
 This prints the laws or libels — that avers  
 Enough to make just gods of ministers;  
 While all, grave organs, retail without let  
 The varied humdrum of a cabinet —  
 Bearing on broad, authoritative page  
 The eagle signet fierce — and this is patronage!

The press is but a battery of words,  
 But yet more vengeful than your guns or swords;  
 Lo! where it opens with its barb and ball,  
 And reputations by the hundred fall!  
 Some, like Antæus, issue from the fight  
 With strength unwasted, and with armor bright;  
 While some survive the bullets of the day,  
 But just survive to limp their life away!  
 Oft goes the volley, it must be confest;  
 Commissioned by poor powder, at the best;  
 And barking like some pistolet or cur,  
 Is its own tell-tale of its calibre;  
 Oft in diversion admirably strange,  
 Hits harmless creatures widest of its range;  
 And oft, alas! the still uninjur'd rank  
 Proves the dull shot particularly blank!

9 Behold our Journals — messengers of ill,  
 With column wide, and conscience wider still,  
 Ranging our mad republic with a rule  
 To which poetic license is a fool.  
 And oft we gaze — and gaze — and wonder why  
 That fowls so heavy should so swiftly fly ; —  
 So charg'd with dulness to the very head  
 That all admit them but excursive lead —  
 Until the witness of their ample size  
 Unfolds the riddle and unveils our eyes —  
 Each, not unlike another cackling thing,  
 Sails on supported by its width of wing.

In cities first the taint of type begins,  
 Each, in all latitudes, the sink of sins ;  
 There, like its smoke-wreaths in perpetual steam,  
 The plague goes upward from the poison'd ream ;  
 Each night condenses what the day dispers'd,  
 And each next morn dawns deadlier than the first.  
 On mammoth sheet the fell contagion flies,  
 And paper fine embalms the finer lies.  
 There polish'd phrase extenuates the hit,  
 And half its rancor is redeemed by wit ; —  
 There fashion e'en to scandal gives a grace,  
 And at its worst it is genteely base.  
 But when from glutted city with despair  
 On these broad pinions politics take air,  
 Each stirring village or each little town  
 Takes up the slander which the last threw down ;  
 And lo ! the petty press without delay  
 Retail's the sacred foulness of the day ;

While in a sickly mimickry of mind  
 It seeks for daily but can never find,  
 It soils the subject it essays in vain,  
 And lost to taste grows graceless and profane.  
 There mid bad print and stock all thick and vile,  
 Hard jests grow rougher and the best defile,—  
 Until the hireling thing they paper call,  
 With types unpaid for, and no list at all,  
 With new contractions as you further go  
 From the court journals of a yard or so,  
 Sinks its dimensions to a window pane,  
 And fights for glory if it can't for gain !  
 Then, as the climax of collected gall,  
 Whose page grows ranker as the sheet grows small,  
 Amid its own last loathsomeness it goes  
 Down to the bathos of its sweet repose !  
 As from the festering centre to extremes,  
 Some oozy fountain pours its deadly streams,  
 Through baser channels still they love to flow  
 Still new corruption gathering as they go,  
 Till in some pool of feculence they die—  
 A new Asphaltes quiv'ring to the sky !

Sick—sick ! and must this spirit sweep in power  
 Through church, and senate, and the social bower !  
 Must we lament—and still be doom'd to feel  
 Religion's, party's, rude unholy zeal,  
 That scorns affection, and invades the hearth  
 Where all life's lov'd and beautiful has birth,  
 And in its mad, unrestrained footsteps goes  
 Up to those still deep fountains of repose

That in their blessed beauty ever lie  
 Shrin'd in the temples of our sympathy ;  
 And with the horrid Upas of its breath  
 Taints every source with bitterness and death.  
 Then, all the looks that gladden'd us for years,  
 Those looks whose meaning stirs us more than tears,  
 Retreat upon the heart — where strife and gloom  
 Alternate hold stern tenantry till doom ;  
 And Discord, like a harsh and midnight bell,  
 Sounds through Affection's rifled citadel !

How many hearts grow cold — and droop — and die  
 In this unhallow'd toil for mastery ! —  
 How many, girdled by that golden chain  
 Whose links, once sever'd, will not clasp again,  
 From that endearing contact fall away  
 To live through years of feverish decay !  
 Bright spirits parted through all changes save  
 The last and noiseless gath'ring of the grave !

Shift we our movement — I would fain rehearse  
 Our varying subject to a gayer verse.  
 Now see it, dedicate to all the Nine,  
 Come in some monthly modest Magazine ; —  
 In Dailys now that gather and impart  
 The fleeting lights of literature and art ; —  
 While they who lord it o'er this better page,  
 Who neither critic war provoke nor wage,  
 No longer doom'd exclusively to drudge  
 Now play the truant and now act the judge ;  
 Leave their lean journals for the Capitol  
 And their own letters correspondence call ;

Now glance at tariff—now review a play,  
 And track the dolphin genius of the day.  
 All such, a merry brotherhood, shall pass  
 Admitted freely to your hearth and glass,  
 Install'd, unquestion'd, by a right to dine,  
 At once the critics of your books and wine.  
 And last, to trace our light material down  
 Through all the odd vocations of the town,  
 See those who palates treat, as well as mind,  
 Consume whole quires to give their puffs the wind ;  
<sup>10</sup> Write like a chemist, and commend the while  
 Their tone of pastry by their ease of style.  
 On female heads monopoly to win  
 See it supply both outside and the in—  
 In poems now, that will not bear the name,  
 And now in Navarinos, soar to fame !

But ah ! what shadow on its pathway falls,  
 And on its march all intellect appals !  
 See on the Capitol petitions pour  
 That her commission'd wheels on Sunday run no more—  
 No more be op'd that interesting bag  
 Which at its swiftest always seems to lag—  
 When expectation, at its agony,  
 Complains that poets' steeds alone can fly—  
 No more shall wake the village Sabbath morn  
 The exploding lash, nor yet the echoing horn !  
 But the whole empire where the post prevails  
 Abide a new paralysis of mails.  
 Alas ! the hope of letters ! Wo to you  
 Who pray and preach a policy so blue !

On ye the loss of 'late intelligence,'  
 Love-notes delay'd and news of pounds and pence,  
 The merchant's blessing, and the statesman's gall,  
 In all their pelting luxury shall fall.  
 O, could your blunted vision but behold  
 How ye would blast the holy cause of gold;  
 Could your dim optics but unjaundic'd see  
 What worlds ye stop of packages mark'd 'free'—  
 When speeds the speech like fire through every rank  
 Under the forcing process of a frank,  
 That little courier of complacency  
 Stamp'd with the sacred magic of M. C.—  
 What jokes, what journals, libels and reviews  
 Ye strangle, ye destructionists of news!  
 That ye this crude republic would compel  
 To lose one seventh of what they teach so well,  
 Believe no other prayer had 'scap'd you then  
 But for fresh steeds to drive as fast again!

The game is up. The hunter sounds the mort—  
 And satin soon embalms the sad report—  
 Visions of horrid monks, and cross, and cell,  
 The bigot's torture, and the passing-bell,  
 Church, State, and priestcraft surge upon our ears  
 Like dull sounds struggling up from buried years.  
 Backward the story runs from age to age  
 Catching some marvel up at every stage,  
 A warning here and there a scandal stores,  
 And for a theme on inconvenience soars.  
 Not e'en to Bibles would admit command,  
 And holds the Charter first should rule the land—

And with a freedom that surpasses all,  
Discards all texts from Moses down to Paul !

May not bank-paper now invite our song,  
Thin, but how oft unfortunately strong !  
How oft the holder, with a visage blank,  
Thinks the engraving better than the bank —  
While many a bill, though frail as gossamer,  
Outlives the hope of payment promis'd there !  
Once pictur'd representative of cash ! —  
But when banks fail, and corporations crash,  
Lo the poor note in sympathy retires,  
Or crush'd in some convulsive pocket-book, expires  
And the dim gold, *now* sure 'the root of evil,'  
Since with large credit it has play'd the ———,  
Pil'd in inglorious vaults, the sepulchres  
Where nothing living enters but cashiers —  
Shut out from brokers and its old devotion,  
Sits the sad spirit of arrested motion !  
While they who guard the stock, the few elect,  
Directors call'd, have nothing to direct !  
And he who liv'd by hire, now nothing lends,  
And sighs, and sighs in vain, for dividends —  
His dunless dreams of yesterday, to day  
Change for the dull realities of pay —  
And the next morn annihilates the town,  
For as the sun comes up, his sign goes down !  
Then, while he holds the world is but a school,  
And deems the man too honest is a fool,  
Compounds and curses — but remembers yet  
To be in fashion is to be in debt.

There is a rage for authorship. Of old  
 Men wrote, they say, for garlands — not for gold.  
 But like cameleons, not particular  
 For unromantic bread, they liv'd on air —  
 Choosing to give the intellect away  
 Than do so shockingly as deal in pay !  
 But all, grown wiser now, take no offence  
 When Goodrich talks of drafts and recompense !

For mark yon Book of Beauty — gentle thing !  
 All silk outside, and satin all within —  
 Call'd New-Year's Presents — and so sung and sold,  
 Though born back, sure, full three months in the old.  
 With pictures so ineffable, you feel  
 You 'd proffer pearls for such returns in steel —  
 Each leaf of that last daintiness, it seems  
 For fairy fingers made, which stir our hair in dreams !

Sweet volumes for these dear and drowsy days  
 Of cushion'd carryalls and lazy grays,  
 When in the crawling luxury backward flung,  
 You list the warbling of some silver tongue.  
 As pensive beauty lisps the thrilling tale  
 To some o'erbending listener, young and pale —  
 Or strains of low, unwilling music steal  
 From one hung careless o'er the flashing wheel,  
 Who, with a ceaseless, drony hum fills in  
 The torturing pauses of th' enchanting thing,  
 And all who come for reading or the ride  
 Vote graver books of common sense go wide,  
 And wend, as such deep students ever must,  
 Reckless alike of landscape or the dust.

Nor this alone its power. Behold it lies  
 In twilight boudoirs, for those deep, deep eyes,  
<sup>11</sup> Like Guido's faces, come from Paradise !  
 Emblem of some fine presence from above,  
 Some double extract literature of love.  
 Lo ! where the suitor, though rejected, yet  
 Too difficult to die — too faithful to forget,  
 Arm'd with an Annual to the siege once more  
 Flies with a valor all unfelt before.  
 Exhorts—reproaches—looks—and sighs—and swears,  
 And all devotion's desperation dares —  
 Then as entranc'd he sees the rising tear,  
 Backs adjuration with a Souvenir ;—  
 And ere the struggling stream begins to flow,  
 Quick plies a Token or some fine Bijou,  
 Till through mere silk and gold a conqueror,  
 He wins his way where Passion might despair.


Alas ! the hope for rhyme as well as reason,  
 When one man writes two tragedies a season !  
 And how each dream of victory in us dies,  
 When poets toil, but players win the prize !  
 Yet ye who fail'd, and ye who almost won,  
 Dash not your pen, nor deem yourselves undone —  
 It only proves that he who bore the pelf  
 Can write but better pseudo-Indian than yourself !  
 If, wanting consolation, still you pine,  
 Good dinners are your nobler anodyne.  
 Hold to true drama — and have oft recourse  
 From Tremont Theatre to Tremont House —  
 Here the good joint — and there th' enthusiast burns,  
 Boyden and Shakspeare rule the roast by turns !

Last, paper comes in form to try the soul —  
 Blank book well thumb'd, or long portentous roll !  
 The Agent's here — whose visage is a bribe,  
 Arm'd with each dear temptation to subscribe.  
 Old or Young Rapid, round the land he glides  
 And talks as fast and headlong as he rides —  
 Recites the same old tale in every village —  
 Leaps walls, to tease grave farmers at their tillage ;  
 Debate octavos in the midst of hay,  
 And whisper, with a nod, ' No crops, no pay !'  
 Be you in office drest, and wear the robes,  
 Your weaker side still cunningly he probes —  
 Talk you of times and stinted salary,  
 The rogue still whispers — ' leading men should buy ;'  
 Point to a family that must be fed,  
 He 'll prove his book should come before your bread !—  
 He hunts you down as some devoted game,  
 Nor gives the chase up till he *gets your name*.  
 Perhaps some sermons or a shipwreck first  
 The wily fellow shows — and buy you must ;  
 Or some new grammar by some man of sense —  
 Or book profuse in horrid accidents —  
 New poems, by some young but hapless bard,  
 Whose wingless Pegasus goes high but hard —  
 Or last, some *Life*, 't would take a life to read,  
 Of some, whose dying was his kindest deed !  
 Or some good soul, no Cæsar in his line,  
 Whom unaccustom'd to believe divine,  
 You hear applauded with a smile of scorn,  
 And ask half doubting where the man was born !  
 Still over each, you have the same sad song,

Dull at the best, and at the shortest long,  
 Until your foe, to turn the tide of fight,  
 Facetious grows, and sociably polite ;  
 Floods you with fun about his books and men,  
 Till smiles come fast, and you relent again—  
 Till grown so sympathetic as to laugh,  
 You have his wit — and he — your autograph !

But cease the strain — and be the lyre unstrung  
 Whose chords so wildly and so long have rung,  
 Yet not in vain, perchance, the wand'ring lay  
 Hath borne the hour, though wearily away,  
 So Truth have found an echo as it fell  
 With you, whose priesthood is to guard her well ;—  
 Here, in her temple, where her gather'd sons  
 Change war for sport, and politics for puns —  
 Here, where the laurel garland hangs so high,  
 Few but the gifted for the wreath may try,  
 Where some their way by time and fortune win,  
 And some of us, 't is thought, ' come cranking in !'

Now from this proud and venerated shrine,  
 Where Learning's living light unclouded shine,  
 As my faint harp's last deep vibration dies,  
 One prayer for thee, my country, shall arise.  
 O ye, who gather to her civic field,  
 Be honesty your sword and right your shield !  
 Though ye be strong, still not ungirded go  
 Where fate of millions bides upon your blow.  
 Nor think true greatness like an heirship falls —  
 They first must win who wear her coronals.



Let the fast tribute of the spirit pour  
 Round those who 've firmly fought, and bravely bore —  
 Whose tones, so full of eloquent command,  
 Pass like an anthem o'er the leaping land —  
<sup>12</sup> Out of the ocean of whose soundless minds  
 Great thoughts heave up, like billows to the winds  
 When storms have stoop'd upon them — and a voice  
 Bids their deep strength awaken and rejoice —  
 Be there no Envy here ! — nor lip avow  
 A curse, whose name should flush a dying brow !  
 But all this mighty heart that heaves around,  
 Wide as the land, and thrilling to its bound,  
 Let that vast, noble rivalry pervade  
 Of naught but victory in benefits afraid —  
 Nor on our front time chisel it in shame  
 'T was jealous rancor bore thee back from fame !  
 But be the last inscription blazon'd there,  
 United still, through glory and despair !

## NOTES.

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<sup>1</sup> *And o'er their ashes in a bright command  
Prelates and Premiers behold her stand.*

It was said, some time ago, that a sketch of the life and services of Mr Canning was given to the world by his widow. This is very recently contradicted. The widow of the accomplished Bishop Heber, however, has given us two large quartos to his memory.

<sup>2</sup> *Now builds a Monthly, now an Obelisk.*

*Fœmina semper parata.* — It is, perhaps, generally understood that the Bunker Hill Monument is now virtually in the hands of the ladies, whose laudable design it is to finish it, by subscription.

<sup>3</sup> *When to defend a blanket or a book.*

Every body recollects the sensible inquiry of the Edinburgh Review, 'Who reads an American book?' and its equal satire on some of our other manufactures.

<sup>4</sup> *Here comes some Clerk or Captain, with a 'tone,'  
And unappeas'd 'expression,' all his own.*

See Captain Basil Hall's Travels in the United States.

<sup>5</sup> *Yet with a slow and half repentant pen,  
Swears, though ungenile, they are 'gentlemen.'*

See the North American Review upon Captain Hall's book.

<sup>6</sup> *And finds a steamboat temple for her vows.*

I think the story went so, lately, that the ladies, in one of the steamers on the western waters, elected a President in this way — by anticipation.

<sup>7</sup> *And straight they close upon a plea of land.*

See the speeches upon Mr Foot's Resolutions respecting the Western lands, submitted during the last session of Congress.

<sup>8</sup> *As Helen's tripod, &c.*

See this story as related by Plutarch.

<sup>9</sup> *Behold our Journals, &c.*

It need hardly be said that reference is had here solely to the press, as it is *abused*,—not, in general terms, as an engine of power. I mean to express myself wholly in relation to the reckless and unhallowed spirit of political controversy, which, no one will deny, is carried on in a manner that deserves unqualified reprobation.

<sup>10</sup> *Write like a chemist, and commend the while  
Their tone of pastry by their ease of style.*

Lady Morgan has an idea much like this in her Book of the Boudoir, and I may say I am indebted to her for it.

<sup>11</sup> *Like Guido's faces, come from Paradise.*

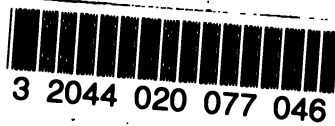
This was said of the great artist, by Passeri, as related by D'Israeli, in his *Curiosities of Literature*, second series.

<sup>12</sup> *Out of the ocean of whose soundless minds  
Great thoughts heave up, &c.*

Can it be necessary that names should be mentioned here, while the whole land is yet ringing with the eloquence of some who have so recently advocated the Constitution, and particularly the UNION of these States?







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